

# LAUNCH A NEIGHBORHOOD TIMEBANK

City of St. Louis Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative

Neighborhood Time Bank project in Lathrup Village, MI



## DESCRIPTION

A timebank is a currency, like money, that can be traded among neighbors. In this case, the currency is an hour of time. An hour of help earns one credit. Unlike money, there is no price placed on different kinds of service, an hour is an hour, regardless of the help given. Timebanking reweaves communities by valuing the contributions of everyone, and joins the unused resources with unmet needs of residents. Any individual can participate, as well as organizations, businesses, and government agencies.

## NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS

### Environmental

- More local exchange of goods and services that potentially help reduce waste and energy consumption associated with transportation and large-scale industrial processes

### Social

- Leveraging of local skills and resources
- Empowerment of individuals to help each other and their community
- Improved sense of place and ownership in the community
- Forum for interaction between all ages, classes, and ethnicities

### Economic

- Goods and services provided at no money cost
- Goods and services that may otherwise have no money value begin to have value in an alternative economy
- Creation of a local bartering system that is resilient during economic fluctuations



Cowry Collective BarterFest in St. Louis



Leaf raking day in Kirkwood, MO

## RELATED TOOLS

When paired with other tools, creating a neighborhood time bank can contribute to a more connected, generous, and locally integrated neighborhood. Think about community cohesion, local prosperity, and healthy vibrant communities. Try combining this tool with:

- Establish a Community Garden or Local Food Installation
- Start a Shop Local or Green Business Campaign
- Establish a Community Tool Library
- Start or Enhance a Neighborhood Safety Program

## EXAMPLES

**Grace Hill Settlement House MORE (Member Organized Resource Exchange), St. Louis, MO**

Underpins community involvement in 11 neighborhood and 4 health centers.

**Cowry Collective, St. Louis, MO**

Time bank that aims to build community among people of African descent.

**Echo Park Time Bank, Los Angeles, CA**

Time bank with a focus on strengthening networks of sustainable knowledge.



Cowry Collective leader  
Chinyere Oteh



Cowry Collective BarterFest

## GET STARTED

1. **Organize** Talk to other interested neighbors and form a group that is committed to creating a Time Bank in your neighborhood. Collaborate with your neighborhood organization to help find interested members and to see what community networks or methods of outreach already exist.
2. **Research** Research other **Time Banks** including the examples on the previous page. There are many resources available to help you get started, including Time Bank specific software for purchase. Some existing Time Bank organizations, like [timebanks.org](http://timebanks.org), offer training and planning courses for a small fee. Determine what works best for your anticipated group size and budget.
3. **Considerations** A few things to consider:
  - The system - Traditionally, one hour of labor is traded for someone else's hour, or "Time Dollar," regardless of what type of services are exchanged. Goods and/or services are posted on a forum specifying what a member seeks and what he or she can offer, and transactions are recorded and accumulate without interest. How this process works can vary per Time Bank.
  - Rules and cost of membership - Monthly or annual fees can be tools to finance a website or other means of operations, as well as a symbolic fee to ensure active participation from members. Sometimes this is accomplished alternatively or concurrently by requiring a minimum number of service hours per designated time period (The Cowry Collective, for example, requires 2 hours per month).
  - Consider requiring all new members to complete a Time Bank training course sponsored by fellow members of your Time Bank to communicate the goals and expectations of becoming a member. Since Time Banking is an alternative form of local economy, you want to ensure that the work between members of the community are valued equally and that no member is taken advantage of.
4. **Share Information and Skills** Create a database of what skills members are willing to offer along with member contact information and make the list available to the entire community. Consider posting this data to a website or an online spreadsheet so members can freely contact each other about what goods and services are being offered.
5. **Kickoff** Hold a kick-off event to raise awareness of your program and to celebrate the skills everyone in your community has to offer. Remember the founding principle of Time Banking is that no one person's time is more valuable than another's. Use this fact to make everyone feel like they are an essential and talented member of your neighborhood and have many skills to offer.



### RELATED SUSTAINABILITY PLAN CATEGORIES

This tool supports the following goals and strategies:

#### Arts, Culture & Innovation

Strategies: G3-Harness community energy and interest in the arts through volunteer programs.

#### Empowerment, Diversity & Equity

Strategies: D3-Encourage inter-generational programs that bring seniors and youth together.

#### Prosperity, Opportunity & Employment

Strategies: D3-Encourage volunteerism to utilize skills and experience of those not directly in the labor force; H2-Fund more programs that teach individuals tangible job skills and generate usable products/benefits for the community.

For the most current examples, updated tools, and information, visit the City's Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative website:

**SUSTAINABLENEIGHBORHOOD.NET**